

God - All in All

by

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I am putting pen to paper, though it may never get so far as print, in order to try and explain the light received in recent years, which has profoundly deepened my understanding of God and His ways, and therefore my Christian living and service.

My reluctance to do so is that such root problems as the real meaning of good and evil, and consequently our reaction to them, do not trouble the majority of Christians, and that many who read this may wonder what a person wants to delve into these things for at all. Also there is the fact that one can “see” things far more easily than one can express them. It has taken me years of meditation and the feeding of my soul on new light as it has been granted, to get real illumination on these things that have affected my whole outlook; but I did not find them easy to understand, and therefore all the more not easy to expound in a few sentences. But still I persevere in doing so, because what has been transforming light to me is sure to be light to at least some others, and these things burn in me to be expressed.

The touchstone of all to me is the Bible as God’s Word, and I soak in that, both Old and New Testaments. At the same time I must admit also my great debt to some writers outside the Bible. I always had a hunger to go deep, and I cannot say that I have found the help I sought in present-day writings; but heights and depths opened to me in some of the old authors. I was first put on the track of these by Dr. Andrew Murray’s book *Wholly for God*, which was not his own writings, but extracts from two of the most wonderful treatises ever written on the deep things of God, Williams Law’s *Spirit of Prayer* and *Spirit of Love*. These old writers such as William Law are not easy to read; they waste no words in a mass of illustration, but in a great flow of language, and incidentally magnificent English prose, carry the reader on from height to height. For this reason Andrew Murray produced his book to whet the appetite for more, and prepare the reader for sustained effect. Certainly he whetted mine, and I was able to get Law’s works, and reveled for years in them.

But Law was only a disciple of a far greater man, in my judgment the profoundest writer and expounder of the Scriptures who has ever lived – Jacob Boehme, the German cobbler-mystic. Some of his books also I was able to get; although I would not quickly recommend them to others (even if obtainable) as his lack of education and method of expressing himself make him most difficult to

understand; yet I have found that as I have persisted, a few sentences of his will blaze with light beyond whole books of other authors.

Yet all that I have read and gained from these and other men, I have carefully compared to the Scriptures (of which they are expositions), to be sure that all was true to the touchstone. Nor is anything I say here a mere copy or quotation. I have no books by me or with me except the Bible, and have not read these other authors for months. But what has come from God to me has been “eaten” and digested and worked out and become my own.

My problem has centered mainly in the defeatism of so much of Christianity, and as I knew it in my own experience also. There appeared to me both in my own thinking and that of many others, a desperate conflict going on between good and evil, and the advantage often very much more on the devil’s side than on God’s. In common with all Christians, my faith in God’s ultimate victory has not faltered, but that did not solve my immediate present-day problem. I knew all too well the overwhelming sense of the power of evil in one’s environment, in one’s very neighbours one was trying to win to Christ; then there were the mountainous difficulties that oppose Christian achievement, the circumstances that the devil himself seems to engineer to overthrow the progress of the Gospel; then there was the pressure of evil on one’s personal life, the trying circumstances or people, the financial problems, sickness and bereavement, fightings without and fears within. And all this besides the problem of evil in its universal aspects, its origin, its world dominion, its final destiny.

Now the first fact which became clearly fixed in my mind and convictions was that there is no alternative source in creation, no dualism as it is called, and that the key to the meaning and progress of life is only to be found by tracing all things to their one origin, “without Him was not anything made that was made”. And coupled with this the basic faith of Christianity that God is “an eternal will to all goodness”, and that “every creature of God is good”.

If this is so, then we have to find an explanation and origin of evil as proceeding out of good. We might stop here and say “Why need we?” Is it not sufficient that evil and good are hard facts, and that all we need to bother about is their remedy? I have not found this to be so. To me a deeper understanding of the way by which these two great streams that effect all life have proceeded from one Source, and are to be re-united again in Him (“that He might gather together in one all things in Christ”) helps me to a fuller co-operation with His purposes in the present.

I found the clue to the explanation in a verse in Isaiah, “I (the Lord) form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil (confusion)” (Isa. 45:7).

I saw that at the root of all life lie two realms of principles, what Jacob Boehme called the dark principle and the light principle; and that both, not merely the light principle, have their source from God. The dark principle is the hidden foundation of all life. All nature has its origin in strong desire and attraction to itself. But every function of the universe by its very activity quickens its opposite into life; indeed that state of tension between opposites makes life. Thus strong desire and attraction to oneself by its very drawing stings into activity – repulsion, the opposite to attraction – the going out from oneself. The tug of war between these two equal forces, attraction and repulsion, the desire to get and

the desire to display and achieve, creates what James calls the whirling “wheel of nature” in which all the strength of nature is manifested – its fierce passions, ambitions, determinations, boastfulness, jealousies, etc.

These facts are seen and recognized by all in scientific circles today so far as this outward world is concerned. For it has now been established beyond doubt that all natural objects, animate and inanimate, sun, air, earth, physical life, have one single life principle, and attraction and repulsion of positive and negative particles of electricity. So fierce is the tension between them that they whirl around each other, the negative around a positive nucleus in incredibly minute solar systems at incredibly high speeds, to which they give the name of atoms, electrons, neutrons, etc. Exactly in the same way can this same principle be seen in the opposite end of the scale, the vast whirling masses of the solar system. But the laws that govern visible nature are only outward examples of the same laws which are in operation in the spiritual realm, for the material is only the spiritual slowed down to the point of visibility.

Indeed human nature itself reveals this underlying principle in its unending restlessness (until it has found the other realm or principle of light for which it has been created, as will be explained). Only a glance at ourselves before we knew Christ, or at the world with its endless search for satisfaction, shows us how men are torn between these two tendencies on the one hand to get and enjoy, and on the other to achieve and display.

But now it is of highest importance to understand that as this is the root of all nature in the universe, and there cannot be nature at all in existence without it, if we may for the moment look into the Godhead itself and dissect what is really indivisible for the reason that all three Persons have lived from eternity in one Another, we find this same nature in God. It is for this reason that we must get it perfectly clear that this root of all nature, which we called the dark principle, is not wrong in itself, but on the other hand essential. If we stopped short in our investigation at this juncture, it would seem to leave us with a blasphemous statement concerning God, and one that contradicts Scripture when it says, “In Him is no darkness at all.” But we may illustrate by pointing out that organs of our body might seem queer and uncouth when temporarily removed for examination by a doctor, yet as perfect and wonderful when hidden away where they are never meant to be seen in their proper position in the body. So also the fact of evil, which was never meant to be known or seen, compels us to search into laws of life which might not otherwise have concerned us, and to look for a moment even into the Godhead at aspects of His being, which properly speaking are and always have been swallowed up in the light which no men can approach unto.

The Old and New Testaments give us very clearly a glimpse of these two principles in God. In the Old where He is seen in the main dealing with the old nature, we read of His wrath, jealousy, fury, hate, thick darkness, severity, righteousness. In the New, where it is the revelation of the kingdom of heaven, we see His mercy, self-emptying, forgiveness, love, light, meekness.

Coming down now from God to men, it is from this that we realize that the fierce, strong, determined nature of man is God’s original gift to us, a part of Himself.

We can easily see that the other side, the fruits of the Spirit, the New Testament virtues are from God and of Him. But the point is that there would be no such beautiful characteristics, if there were not as a basis to nature in God and men a strong, determined self-hood capable of fiery passions, fierce likes and dislikes, intense desires – what old Jacob Boehme called “the dark principle” in God and nature. And from this we can begin to catch a glimmering of the source of evil, and the meaning of the prophet’s words, “I create confusion, I create darkness”.

But does that mean that there is evil in God or in His creation as it came from Him? I need hardly say it does not. We have only gone half-way in our explanation.

There is an end to the meaning of creation, as well as a beginning; even as there is a consumation to the nature of our All-beautiful God. In Him it is found in the springing out from that strongest, if need be most terrible, supreme Self of the universe, of the pure stream of eternal love, blessing, longsuffering, self-giving centered in His Son of His bosom. Toward His Son all the might of that Self of all selves is transmuted into a passion of endless love and tenderness; but let us mark, a passion of love which could not exist without the strength of a nature which has the opposites of tender love in it, which opposites have become the fuel and force of glories and graces of the kingdom of heaven.

So also in His creatures. From Father and Son has been breathed forth the Spirit, who has been the Architect of the Universe, building it of the very same materials of which the God-head are made. The Spirit made man a peculiar and outstanding part of the creation, the image of God, having the nature of God; and in man, as in God, is to be found “the dark principle” at his roots. We are selves. We have no doubt about that. We have desires, intelligence, power of decision, passions. Unless the instincts of self-preservation and self-expression were powerful in us, humanity would dissolve; that is obvious. Nor are a single one of these characteristics wrong in themselves; that also is obvious.

But man is very indeed on probation. He is not in a world by himself. He has above, around and in him, his Creator. He has around him his fellow-creatures. His own destiny and the character which is to be manifested by all the powers of his personality whether good or evil, depend upon the direction in which he turns. For guidance we only have to look at God. All His almighty self has been poured into the channel of love, first to His Son, then to all the creation of His Son; thus love and the self-giving which underlies it, is the key to the harmony of life, the law of the universe, the satisfaction and integration of all the contending forces of the personality; the only solution which the psychologist of the twentieth century can offer, just as it was offered two millenniums ago by God Himself manifest in the flesh.

And so man chooses. He turns in on himself and the warring passions of his own nature, and the outcome is the manifestation of the kingdom of darkness. What is meant to be the soil for the production of the beauties of the kingdom of light becomes the source of all evil, and itself becomes an evil thing, although in its origin, good. Out of the heart of such men proceeds all wickedness, headed up in the one word, selfishness. And in that choice can be nothing but inward war; as well as outward, for the man that lives unto himself is out of harmony with universal nature, and can never get into harmony while remaining on that road.

But he can choose along God's way. He can give himself to be possessed by God's Spirit, to be immersed in the sea of love, light, meekness, unselfishness, mercy. Does he become unmanned in doing so? No, he finds the key to life. All that burns in him to express itself, all his individuality, is consummated in love-service to God and his neighbour; all the forces of his being that could display brute force, self-will, pride and so on, are transmuted into the all-conquering strength of love. God is seen again manifest in the flesh.

Thus we see that all the instincts and powers which go to make up personality are in their highest degree in God, and also in all men, the most evil as well as the best. This was Paul's meaning when he told the heathen world of idol-worshippers, that in God they live and move and have their being, and are His offspring, even though in another place it speaks of unrighteous and unloving men as "children of the devil". In the same sense it may be said with equal truth that in God the devil himself lives and moves and has his being. In God, and in those who are yielded to His spirit of love and light, the strong powers of selfhood form the necessary and hidden background and source of strength to the manifestation of all godly and lovely virtues. In a Christlike character, we see His beauty shining through deeds and words, yet we well know that there is a distinct and fully formed individuality and selfhood behind. The powers of personality which could become, and once were, members of the kingdom of darkness, are as active as ever, but in the position for which they were created – in the hiddenness, in the background, the fuel for the flames of heavenly love.

To grasp this fact, that everything in itself is good, and of God and in God, has given me new eyes which to look at myself, my neighbour (saved and unsaved), and the world of nature. I understand the meaning of such phrases as "to the pure all things are pure; "If thine eye is single, thy whole body is full of light"; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, etc." – for how can one fulfill this last, when we must needs be creatures of many loves and many thoughts, unless we have found an eyesalve by which we can see and love God in all things and people? By seeing God in all, capacities for love, buoyant hope (in modern language, optimism), a new sense of the beautiful have sprung to life.

Evil is now seen to be outcome of an unlawful separation. The Scriptures show this from the beginning when they say that the first temptation was to know an experience of good and evil – to taste the elemental powers of our God-given nature (the dark principle), such as self-will, passion, ambition, desire, divorced from their designed immersion in the Holy Spirit and thus become evil. Self without God. Thus it is that we always and rightly define sin as "separation from God". And thus also the heart cry of the restless world is and forever will be, for harmony, peace, and integrated personality – in other words a selfhood which instead of remaining a separate entity, becomes rightly harmonized with God, with itself, and with both its neighbour and its environment. The psychologists themselves who pursue a perfectly lawful and helpful line of investigation, in examining the processes of mind and spirit, give harmony, or integration, as the one true end and consummation of human personality. Exactly, they are only saying in modern terms that man must have what the first chapter of Genesis tells us he has lost.

It is also seen that the only possible, as well as reasonable, solution to the problem of evil is salvation through Christ. Nowadays the average man has no such reverence and respect for the authority of the Bible as even those of the Victorian era. An appeal to a text is not now the end of all argument. Therefore it is all the more necessary to be convinced ourselves and to be able to demonstrate to those

who do not fear God's Word that salvation through Christ alone solves both the practical needs of, and scientific investigations into the nature of man. The essence of Christ's way of salvation is first of all a life yielded to death in our place and as our representative, a death in which all believers share; and secondly a life actively and adventurously lived out in the complete control of the Spirit. These facts of history and experience (in the lives of millions since Pentecost) exactly fit the most modern demands for the solution to the human problem. Sharing in Christ's death, by forgiveness through His atoning work and therefore perfect adjustment to God, by dying out to the old life through recognizing our identification with Him in death, and by this means achieving inward harmony and integration: and sharing in His life by living a new life under the dominion of the Spirit, where the powers of the personality are transmuted to their rightful use in producing the fruits of the Spirit as citizens of a new realm, the inheritance of the saints in light, the kingdom of heaven.

We have now taken a glance at the origin, meaning the solution of the World's great problem of good and evil, a grasp of which has helped me personally to get an altogether larger understanding of the glory of God, not merely in Himself, but in His creation, and consequently a greater reverence and love for all men and things. But what of the impact of evil upon our daily lives and upon our neighbour? However much we may see God in all, we are still faced with the tremendous fact of evil, whether in the form of sin, calamity or suffering.

We now light upon another key revelation, which for me has solved all, and I mean all, of life's problems as concerns the impact of evil upon myself and my labours and circumstances as a member of Christ. I find that my evils are never the things in themselves, but the effect I allow them to have upon me. In other words evil for me is always an inward thing, not an outward. "The just shall live by his faith" say both the Old and New Testaments. Quite so. The just are those who are adjusted to God and man, to themselves and their circumstances; and that adjustment is only achieved and maintained according to our personal and inward attitude of faith. If we doubt, then all is evil; if we trust, then all is well.

The supreme example of this is Calvary. Christ faced evil and good in reference to it at Gethsemane. The temptation to regard those coming sufferings as evil He rejected when He said, "Not my will," and He declared all that was coming to be inherently good when He said "Thy will be done". His predominant thought and words during those last hours were of fullness of joy, of cheerfulness, of glory present and future. When the author of evil was mentioned, He dismissed him with the mere passing reference, "The prince of this world cometh, but he hath nothing in me". To all appearances Calvary was totally evil, and the Word itself says that Calvary was Satan-engineered, ("Satan entered into Judas"); but Peter said later by the Holy Ghost, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God". So that the believer can say, "All is good. Nothing is evil." For when Satan made his fiercest assault in history, God used him to bring about the world's salvation; God uses evil to bring about good! If Satan's supremest attack of the ages was all God's plan and His special and only means of bringing about the World's redemption, what have we left to say about his petty attacks on our lives and circumstances? And both Paul and James specifically say that a believer knows no evil. One says "All things work together for good", and the other, "Count it all joy when ye fall into diverse trials."

The consequence of a clearer grasp of the fact that Satan and all evil circumstances in our lives are God's most useful instruments for the fulfillment of His purposes, is obvious. All attacks of Satan are

seen to be our blessings. We “count them all joy”; we “rejoice in tribulation”. We use them as special opportunities for us to see the manifestation of God’s power, rather than merely endure them with bad grace as “judgments” or “tests”. Indeed one of the weaknesses of God’s people has been the tendency to look upon trials and adversities merely as means by which God satisfies Himself as to our fidelity; instead of realizing that sufferings are fundamental to the working out of God’s purposes, and the most highly honoured and trusted of His servants are those who are allowed to “fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ”. The Supreme Servant was the Supreme Sufferer, and His sufferings achieved what His matchless life and words could not. Nor must it be thought that any of God’s ways are the arbitrary methods of a dictator who follows his own whim; that is to say, God did not choose the way of suffering for mankind’s redemption just because it pleased Him to do so. God forbid. It is because in no other way can a fallen world return to Him. There has to be a vast dying out of all that has usurped God’s throne in nature, animate and inanimate. The Captain of our salvation has led the way; we all must follow. We have had a suffering God ever since man’s first sin. There they crucified Him for the first time. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, manifesting in flesh and blood at Calvary what He has been suffering and will suffer from beginning to end of the world, crucified afresh in every rebellious member of His family who keeps the door shut against his Owner and Father. And in this suffering the whole creation takes part. God, the Scriptures tell us, subjected the creation to its present experience of pain and vanity, in hope; there is plan, grace, redemption, we may even say necessity, behind it all. Much “evil” and its consequent suffering, is endured as meaningless and undeserved; it is accepted as evil, and reacted to either by rebellion or a fatalistic resignation. But to Christ’s followers, who can glimpse the glorious purpose and triumph in and through evil and suffering, the acceptance and endurance of them becomes an adventure of faith. If God’s gifts are our blessings, and the devil’s assaults are also our blessings, what remains? If good is good, and evil is equally good to the enlightened, then a realm of life is entered where we rejoice always, in everything give thanks, in all things (especially deaths, see Rom 8) are more than conquerors.

Such facts and realities to our souls, however, as those who know “the secret of the Lord”, do not lessen the reality of evil in this world still ruled by the author of evil nor the reality of its impact upon us physically and mentally. Suffering, sorrow, persecution are realities. Christ suffered on Calvary, even though He understood its meaning and rejoiced in Spirit; but it was purposeful suffering, and the exaltation of His spirit in the midst of the very agony of the nails lifted Him above physical pain to compassion and prayer for those who drove them home.

Yes, suffering and evil are real, but the point that concerns me at the moment is that a vast percentage of our suffering is totally unnecessary, and is properly speaking self-inflicted. Very many of what we call trials and worries and cares are merely the devil’s bluff. It is not the things we experience which give us the suffering, but the things we fear we may experience. And this brings us back to our original statement, that not our outward circumstances, but our attitude towards them determines whether they are evil or good to us, of God or of the devil. In the end there is only one conflict in our lives, Doubt versus Faith. As we go right through Scripture that one acid test will tell us to what extent a man’s immediate experience was good or evil to him. Did Daniel enjoy the days previous to his being cast in the lion’s den? How about the three young men while the golden image was being erected and its worship observed? Or Joshua as he spent seven days around the walls of Jericho, or made the three days of preparation before crossing the Jordan? So with us. When, and only when, we have learned the true

interpretation of difficulties, trials, sufferings, set-backs, shall we be able to detect on the spot that traitor within the gates – unbelief – and discover that 99% of our fears, cares, forebodings, sorrows, are caused not by the facts of the situation, but by failure to see God in them and rejoice.

And let us note that this unbelief is not merely a cause of our sorrows and sufferings, but also a potent hindrance to our God of deliverances. We often regard faith as a mere attitude toward God's promises. It is not so. Faith is a giving of substance to things feared. When Job said, "That which I greatly feared is come upon me," he was not giving an example of the law of mere chance, but of the mighty law of faith in good or evil. All is faith, faith is faith, and unbelief is faith, but one is faith in God and good, and the other is faith in the devil and evil. And faith is the creative power in action, man's mightiest and most divine endowment, with the exception of love.

I find the full-orbed standards of Christ each as a mountain whose summit is extremely difficult to gain. This is only as it should be, for in all the arts and sciences of life the true masters are rare, and only with pains and travail have they attained. How much more so in the chief of life's goals, the way of godliness? Since the earliest days of my spiritual enlightenment, at the age of 18, soon followed by the sight of that beckoning finger by Galilee, with the voice saying "Follow me", and the consequent tug-of-war between Him and a dearly loved idol, and a final yielding, I have never been able to cease the pursuit of an uttermost Christlikeness. No half-measures have satisfied. It has been a long trail, and still is, for the flesh is a doughty fighter, and keeps the Pharaoh of a tight hold on his slaves. In my seeking I have drunk at practically all established fountains of teaching concerning the holy life, and some not-established. One lesson learnt by so doing is a continually deeper appreciation, a thankfulness for all the various instruments and methods of presentation by which God displays the riches of His grace before our covetous eyes. I have shared with joy in the fellowship of Keswick, and the wonderful experience of meeting 5000 of God's people all one in Christ; and I have thanked God for its message of consecration which for many has made this convention their Mount of Transfiguration. But still my heart and my flesh cried out for the living God when I went in 1919 to the Mission Field in the heart of Africa; and I soon found myself in desperate need of a visitation from on high which would transform me from a weakling unable to cope with the challenge of the heathen, to a giant who might say with Paul, "Our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the new covenant". Out there I began to receive the magazine of the Overcomer Movement, founded by Mrs. Penn-Lewis, and began to sense in her articles, much of which I did not at first understand, a presentation of the Cross as God's power for the saint as well as sinner, that suited my need. Some years later, in personal conversation with Mrs. Penn-Lewis, though unknown to her, God shed the light I was seeking into my soul, and I entered His rest in the experience of Gal. 2:20, "It is no longer that I live, but Christ that liveth in Me" a definite second work of the Holy Spirit in my heart which has been as revolutionary in my life as was my conversion. Following this I have had closest fellowship with the various centres of Holiness teaching. The Emmanuel Bible School and Mission, Birkenhead, founded by Mr. Drysdale; the Japan Evangelistic Band; the Calvary Holiness Church founded by Mr. Maynard James; Cliff College and others, all standing for the purifying of the heart from all sin and the baptism of the Holy Ghost as taught by Wesley and General Booth, and have received constant inspiration from their emphasis on the entirety of sanctification. Many others, too, I have had fellowship with, such as the Plymouth Brethren, who stand equally for holiness of life but combat the teaching of a "second blessing"; the Pentecostals, whose emphasis, perhaps now less strongly than it used to be, has been that the sign of the baptism of the Spirit must be "speaking in

tongues” and who for this reason have been widely condemned amongst evangelicals as traffickers in evil spirits; with many of these I have had close fellowship and count as honoured brethren in Christ, and I can vouch for the great reality and powerful soul-saving work of many Pentecostal centres; although I am not moved from the conviction that “speaking in tongues” though allowed in Scriptures and practiced in private by Paul, is merely one amongst other gifts of the Spirit, and that union of a soul with God which produces holiness of character and power in service goes far deeper than any particular manifestation, and is by no means dependent upon the reception of this special gift.

I have mentioned all these because fellowship with so many of God’s people holding differing viewpoints in details, as well as fellowship with members of all the great denominations, has compelled me to recognize one certain truth – that the differences between all the groups and sects who alike accept the Scriptures as their authority, are not questions of error, but of emphasis. I believe this truth to be of immense importance. What disruptions there are between sincere and spiritual people! Not necessary divisions caused by irregular conduct, but unnecessary divisions caused by supposed errors of doctrine! What refusals of fellowship! What harsh condemnations of opponents as under delusion, through the flesh or the devil! Differences of the manner of water baptism and the Lord’s Supper; differences between Calvinists and Armenian; differences in millennial teaching. Yet the fact is that God Himself has called each sect and group into existence for the definite purpose of stressing some special aspect of truth, neglected by the other bodies, and thus essential to the whole body of Truth. No sect which emphasizes some special teaching can give equal emphasis to all others, nor is even meant to; its members have been called to a special piece of work, and would fail of their calling if they failed to stress that truth, not indeed to the exclusion of all others but in excess of all others. But, of course, the danger of a particular emphasis on one point is undervaluation of the calling of those who shoot with another arrow from the same quiver of universal truth. For this reason I have been thankful for the experience we have in the W.E.C. of mingling with every type of believer who is faithful to God’s Word, and the consequent discovery that God has His people in all, which gives us something of an inclusive love for all, appreciation of the special emphasis of all, and joy in fellowship with all, while maintaining without concealment or compromise such special aspects of the One Truth which have been entrusted to us.

This, however, has been digression. I was writing of the scaling of the highest summit this world contains, the heights of God. I was describing how I have been refreshed at many a mountain stream on the way, particularly in that experience of the Holy Spirit mentioned above. But the summit has been slighted for me, not so much in that experience contained in the phrase holiness, second blessing, perfect love, consecration, etc. as in UNION. Once again the writings of the great saints and mystics of the past centuries have ministered to me as no others. Such men as William Law, Ruysbroeck, St. John of the Cross, Eckert, have brought deeper and deeper illumination and no description of the way to the summit has seemed more complete to me than the old one, “Purgation, illumination, union.” Here I have found Him Whom my soul loveth.

Two special truths have become embedded in my experience. The first is that God and the believer are ONE in mystic union – the vine and the branch, the head and the body, the living stones of one temple. Forever have I finished with the doubts that assailed me in earlier days, as they torment so many Christians, and were the downfall of Israel in the wilderness – the question “Is the Lord among us or not”. I know my enemy now, the feeling, the suggestion, the appearance that He and I are not one.

Satanic lie has found a joint in my armour if there is an acceptance in my mind that there is even a possibility of a veil between. And with this is the certainty of all power, wisdom, grace for my calling. Once I used to bewail my weakness, now that is lost sight of in the glory of the vision of His strength joined indissolubly to me. That secret was the key to the lives of all the great men of the Bible. Sincerity and zeal, not yet joined to an inborn certainty of God's presence, availed nothing; it was weak through the flesh; it failed in Moses and Peter and a host of others. But when that certainty was married to that zeal as at the burning bush, or at Pentecost, then its recipient became a world-conqueror.

And the second truth is that salvation and sanctification is wholly positive, not negative. In early years of our climb we see more of the cost, the hurt of the death, the price of the surrender, the fierceness of the battle, and so often Christianity appears to us as a giving-up, and we so convey its meaning to others. But nearer the top we see the full sweep of the view from Zion. We see ourselves not narrowed but emancipated. Free in Christ! Out from the chains of selfhood, the life that centred around our poor little ego, into the fullness of Godhead, a life plunged into the universal, where all things have become ours. Poor! Yes, there is that side of it which once occupied us rather to the exclusion of the other, poor as regards our previous claims to personal advantage, personal gain, personal honour, yet rich with the eternal, boundless, ever-satisfying riches, the wealth of giving and loving and serving and worshipping and suffering; as poor & yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things. And in this dying and rising this bondslavery yet emancipation, we find that not one jot of all that selfhood with which we have been endowed, but which has been the minister of sin and servant of the devil, has been lost. At last we have become fully ourselves, but only by losing ourselves and finding our new life in God. Every power of our being which once manifested such evil fruits as pride, jealousy, gross passions, ambition, is now redeemed and harnessed to the use for which it was created, the service and ministry of the kingdom of heaven.

In saying previously that to attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ is to scale the highest summit of the universe, and the most difficult, I was thinking more than anything else of love. When John said, "God is love", we are bold to say that is God's last word spoken. The mind of man can reach no higher. Two millenniums have passed since those words; everything in the realms of nature and spirit has been tirelessly investigated and diagnosed but the final alternatives still remain the same, love or chaos. Except for the type of atheist who makes no attempt to give meaning to life, of which there must be very few among thinking men today, there remains no solution to life whether by politicians, philosopher, or scientist, than some form of the statement "God is love".

But although love of our neighbour (which is in truth only an extended form of the love of God), is bandied about today as the only possible foundation for a world order; yet, when it comes to living by it, one wakes up to discover that it is the hardest thing on earth to achieve.

First of all, in the practical things of life, the moment one takes seriously the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself", the difference between class and class, between the privileged and underprivileged, between the profits of the capitalist and the wages of the employees, between the mansion of the owner and cottages of the dependents, have to disappear. Love means that we have discovered our wealth to be in serving and giving, not in accumulation and display. The ideal of service will displace the ideal of profit in business life which fact alone makes it obvious that the vast majority of

mankind finds it much easier to love in word than in deed. Really to love means a moral and material revolution in a life.

We have aimed at living by these standards in the W.E.C., even as they did in the early church, and the outcome has been a mutual trust and love between the scattered members far and near. All have literally loved their neighbours as themselves, so far as material things are concerned. All have given all. None works for or receives wage or salary. All expend themselves in wholehearted and unremitting service for God and mankind. All they ask of God in return is sufficient for food and clothing. Such funds as come in are equally divided between all up to the point of the supply of necessities. The oldest worker gets no more than the youngest. Any surplus goes to the furtherance of the work. The ideal of all is not to get out of the W.E.C. but to put into it. Each is loving his neighbour as himself, and wishing him what he has himself, and the consequences are rivers of love, joy, peace, confidence, zest in work, flowing between all. The so-called price has been paid, the surrender of the desire or prospect of earthly accumulation of wealth, of comfortable living more than necessities, of class distinction; the reward has been the treasure that rusts not and fades not away, the peace of a life that has found its bourn, the fellowship of loving hearts, the service of the unloved and unlovely in order to introduce them also to their Divine Lover, and in serving them the service of the King of love Himself.

But “fervent love” of the brethren entails far more than the sharing of provisions. The obvious fact of the prevalence of criticism, feelings of injury or slight, resentments, dislikes, coldness, right up the scale to open breaches, amongst spiritual people and organizations, is proof enough that we attain doctrinal correctness, zeal, consecration, faith, long before love, the bond of perfectness.

First, love puts trust in man as well as God. Sincere Christians are far quicker to give their confidence to God as they conceive of Him in heaven, than in God as indwelling His earthly temples. But I have had steadfastly to learn this lesson, that the only basis of heart to heart fellowship and fervent love with my brethren is that I keep my gaze firmly fixed on Christ in them. As a fact spiritual love is Christ in and through me recognizing union with Christ is my brother. And the moment I acquire the habit of the single eye towards Christ in my brother, I find myself seeing and appreciating an endless succession of the beauties of Christ in him. Towards my brother also these words prove true. To the pure my brother is pure, to the unbelieving and defiled, defilement is to be seen in my brother.

But does that mean that I am to ignore faults in my brother? Christ answered that question. “No”, He said in effect, “the faults are there and to be seen; but your wrong attitude in gazing and remarking on your brother’s faults instead of remembering God’s (and your brethren’s) long suffering with your own faults, results in your committing a sin of criticism and unlove, which compared to his fault is as a beam to a mote.” For years now the Holy Spirit has been as a hound of heaven to me on this point. The moment my soul and mind get darkened by dwelling on some weak point in a brother, either in thought or word, I know at once that I have sinned and broken the perfect law of love. Criticism is a sin. It is well that the church should awaken to this. Not only this, but criticism is creative of evil. Love is creative. We know that, for “We love, because He first loved us”. The love of God begot love in us. So the love of man begets love in his brethren, only that properly speaking it is not the love of men, but that same love of God breathing through man. So also the resentment, hardness, criticism of man breeds a like brood in

his brother. We make our own broken fellowships by our own attitudes of criticism and fault-finding. We sow what we reap.

But supposing we admit that the Christian attitude is to see and love all there is of Christ in a brother, and at the same time to refuse to let our minds or tongues dwell on anything unChristlike in him; that still does not do away with the fact that there are these things, even if at the same time we are altogether ready to admit the same in ourselves. Are we then to shut our eyes completely to such things? We shall find that if we fulfill the first condition of perfect love, and are supremely occupied in seeing Christ in a brother, we shall in that attitude of appreciation trust and love towards him in which with the authority of faith we can ask and receive further blessing for him; and even in doing this, we shall find that our emphasis will be on what he is going to become in these respects rather than on what he is; while if we talk about him to others, we shall persist in stressing the points in which his life magnifies Christ. All the day long we are actually ministering life or death to our neighbours, and to those afar off upon whom our thoughts dwell. An attitude of love and trust coupled with faith for any necessary changes will be instruments for growth and unity.

For the greatest cause of disunity amongst brethren is difference of temperament. This is bound to show itself when Christians live or work together in close contact in home, club, parish or mission station. The whole art of living is when contrasting characters in a community are the complement of each other instead of the cause of irritation. The quick with the slow, the lively with the quiet, the saint with the soldier, make up the complete unit, but they also make plenty of opportunity for misunderstandings, irritation, and unintentional offense. All Christian leaders know that an earnest worker will far more easily accept with meekness the insult of a street mob than the treading on a cord by a fellow worker.

Another cause is real or imagined wrong done, often of course the outcome of the clash of temperament. The one remedy for both is very clear and easy of definition. The key is found when we learn to regard the farthest shade of resentment as a deadly sin, more deadly to us by far than the result of any wrong done or imagined, and more of a sin in the eyes of God at least as far as we are concerned, than the supposed wrong itself.

We said above that it is time the church of Christ took criticism seriously as a sin. It is time also that resentment was recognized as a sin. We are human, and there is no state of grace in the body where the first impact of an offence does not hurt and rouse feelings of indignation and injustice. But it is the period after this first reaction to a wrong which is decisive. It is our old friend before us again, the problem of evil and good. It is our attitude which decides the day, not the offence received. If the first thing we take care of is our state of heart in these circumstances, to make sure that we count it all joy, give thanks to God, receive it as His gift, regard it as a new opportunity to show forth love and meekness, allow no trace of personal feeling to remain towards the perpetrator of it, then the day is won. In due course we shall be in a fit frame of mind to find God's guidance as to our actions. And in 99 cases out of 100 we shall find that the guidance is to do nothing. In some we shall find that a great part was misunderstanding, either of our brother's motives or methods: in some we may learn that we got what we deserved; and in very many cases that we are allowing temporary trivialities of personal dignity or precedence to cloud the vision of our high calling, and that the sooner we forget these things the better;

and in the few where there has been real wrong, love and meekness and refusal to allow broken fellowship in spite of wrong will heal the breach or convict the wrong-doer.

But we have to recognize that in all Christian bodies the vast majority, while they show forth Christ's ways in their lives in many other respects totally fail in this. Very seldom one meets the believer who refuses to take offence, or to right a wrong against himself, or to break fellowship. Under the cloak of righteous indignation or a claim to justice or our rights, we vent on the brother a judgment with which is mixed a large percentage of personal resentment.

I Corinthians 13 is the Magna Charta of the human spirit. There by reading it through, putting our own names whenever the word "charity" appears (for in Christ we are love personified), and acting it out, we are freed from the false claims of envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness, and melted into the inward reality of our relationship to all in Christ, members of one body and therefore of one another.

There remains the challenge of the series of Christ's saying, lived out by Himself, which when taken seriously by individual or nation, produces a revolution of outlook and conduct. "Love your enemies", "Resist not evil". "If any man smite you on the one cheek, turn to him the other also". "If any man take away thy cloak, let him have thy coat also". I have not been able for my own satisfaction to discover any other straightforward meaning to these sayings than that I must literally obey them. I am to love my enemy and to do him good. At the Headquarters of a Missionary Society one lives a sheltered life, and does not come in contact with the bitter opponent of a rival creed as is so often encountered in the mission field, or even the business rival who uses any means to outdo one, or even the inmates of home or factory who hate one's Christian witness. My fiercest "enemies" might be said to be those who for various reasons oppose or speak against our work. But even here I have seen my chance of fulfilling the Lord's words, and in doing so have proved the perfection of them. I have made it, as before, my principle to regard no outward thing. If a person has apparently said or done things against me or my work, I have learned the secret of David's attitude, when fleeing from Absalom. Shimei cursed and insulted him as he and his retinue passed out into exile, for which the fiercer members of his body guard drew swords to kill him, but the king said, "Let him curse, for the Lord hath said unto him, curse David."

All persons and things are mine; all friends, for the Lord makes good and evil alike to minister to me and to His purpose of blessing. All that remains for me to guard against is that insidious inward enemy who would sour my spirit under unpleasant treatment, and stir up murmurings within instead of thankfulness, and hate instead of love. I shall never forget the impression made on me by William Law's words to this effect, "When God's love has truly come to birth in us, everything that happens to us is only more fuel for the devouring flames of love." If then my enemy's treatment is a cause of praise to me, if he is God's minister to me, what difficulty remains to me in loving him, serving him as opportunity arises, and praying for his success?

But the fulfillment of these words of Christ affect my person and my possessions just as drastically as my spirit; and perhaps just here comes the rub! I can never take up this attitude of love to my enemy while I cling fast to any earthly honour or property, for my enemy is bound to direct his blows at one or the other. Thus it is that Christ's standards, when acknowledged, have to be woven into the very fabric of home and business life. The burglar may take my property; the unscrupulous business rival

may over-reach me. Is this possible or right in this modern world, because certainly it is not practiced? I am not a business man, and must leave it to one such, if there is one, who has carried through these principles, to bear witness to the inevitable success of doing so. All I know is that Christ's laws are natural laws, the only ones suitable to the harmony and prosperity of the universe. Our futile laws of force, self-protection, revenge are unnatural and bound to ultimate condemnation. I can only say that for myself I cannot but live my life on His full standards and needless to say the Word has been found true that for the man who observes to do God's law, whatsoever he doeth prospers. Of course it has meant from the beginning, as said above, the holding fast to none of this world's goods, and the regarding of even the minimum in daily use, home, furniture, ready money, as my Lord's property upon which He has a claim at any time. Incidentally, it is also a sure truth that love and truth and purity and guilelessness affect the environment of the possessors and practicers of them, and make him far less liable to meet with the assaults and deceits of wicked men.

But we may say, "Even if this is a possible attitude so far as it affects us, is it right towards the wrongdoer? Should he not be stopped in his course of sin?" Yes, where sin is in the question, it is right that the warning and appeal should be made by us, as those who are responsible for the souls of men; but the whole point of Christ's teaching is that when an appeal is accompanied by an action which proves our real concern to be for his eternal welfare, not for our worldly goods upon which he has laid wrongful hands, then our words will have a thousand times more chance of convicting him of their reality. The whole essence of the Gospel is that it supercedes the law; it stands for everything that the law stands for, but it brings home the claims of the law to fallen men, not by threat and force, but by the drawing and conquering power of the self-giving love of Christ, submitting Himself without defense to injustice and criminal dealing, by winning men to accept the true way of life by choice, instead of by compulsion. In like manner the law courts, the claims of our rights, the threat of arrest and prison, the demand for compensation or restitution, is no accompaniment to the message of the One whose character was meek and lowly in heart. It is said of Francis of Assisi that a dwelling place of the early friars was entered by a couple of robbers. The janitor discovered them and drove them out. Francis, returning at that moment, rebuked the janitor, ran after the miscreants, embraced them and brought them back to share his own meal, with the result that they asked to be allowed to stay and themselves join the company.

The truth is that the Cross is the basis of the true way to live. As we previously pointed out, the Cross is deep in the heart and nature of God from all eternity. We attempted to lift the veil in a previous chapter on the root problem of our existence, the meaning of good and evil, the dark principle and the light principle; and to show how in God and the kingdom of heaven, the harsh, the bitter, the strong, the wrathful is the hidden root, sustenance and matrix of all goodness, beauty and truth, never to be seen or known. Selfhood is the foundation of all life, but in God it is the foundation of universal love and self-giving by the free choice in which self-will and independent self expression are yielded up to Universal Love. Evil and devildom was the separation by choice of self from God, thus exposing the hidden roots of nature no longer Christ-centred and creating an opposite kingdom, of darkness, chaos, and all things anti-God and anti-love.

Thus, if we trace it far enough back, we see that in God Himself is a yielding from eternity, a cross at His heart, by which a conceivable self-centredness (for there can be no being of free will who cannot potentially be a self-centred being) has been from everlasting given over to the bringing forth of a universe in love and for love, of which the Supreme Servant is the Creator Himself giving Himself in a boundless ocean of blessing, pouring His gifts on the unjust as on the just, and finally laying bare the whole wealth and meaning of that word of words, Love, in dying at the hands of His own rebellious creatures. Yes, the Cross is the way of Life, from eternity to eternity. Christ is exalted as a lamb (the symbol of a meek, apparently weak, deliberately defenseless way of life) from the foundation of the world right on to where in the book of Revelation the Lamb is still seen on the Throne of the Universe. A most significant vision, for it reveals that meekness, apparent weakness in the hands of wicked men, self-giving to the point of death, all having its roots in universal love, is the opposite to what men think it is. So far from being weakness, it is the strongest power in the universe, the final conqueror. Jesus well knew what He was saying when He said that "the meek shall inherit the earth." We might expect them, perhaps to inherit heaven; but earth? The stronghold of force and violence, and of the gospel that "might is right"! That Lamb on the throne reveals what we have said above, that the perfect personality has a cross at its heart. It appears weak, it does not strive nor cry, push nor bustle, nor scheme; still less does it cheat and lie and resort to force for its ends; nor does it resist its enemies, try to put them down, take vengeance, claim recompense. It has no need to, for it knows well that it's the true strength. Hidden beneath its meekness and quietness, and the returning of good for evil, and universal love are all the powers of selfhood in their true setting for which they were created united with THE Self, God Himself, and carrying out their proper function of supplying energy, purpose, firmness, reliability to love. But the blinded man of the world and dupe of the devil, who has thrown off the yoke of such "fooleries" as unselfishness, loving one's enemies, non-resistance to evil, the way of the meek and lowly heart, vainly imagines that in the display of the elemental forces of nature, apart from Christ's yoke, anger, force, compulsion, pushfulness, boastfulness, all forms of self-energy, he will gain his ends, fulfill his destiny and make his contribution to the onward march of mankind.

But what says history? Mighty figures have come and gone in the past 5000 years. What live of their deeds? All that has helped mankind along the pathway of goodness, beauty and truth. All the rest, personal aggrandizement, national conquest, religious fanaticism, are remembered only as a warning of what to avoid. And towering above all in this twentieth century is the ideal of the life and teaching of the Crucified. All men who think in terms of a world, not merely a section of it, acknowledge today that the world's only hope is a brotherhood based on unselfishness, love, trust, the fulfillment of Christ's words "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself", although the methods by which many of them hope to realize this ideal fall short of or are even contrary to the only way by which it will finally be achieved, spiritually by personal regeneration and historically by the coming of Christ. That lonely figure died in derision; the disastrous and to the life of a mistaken idealist who might have won an empire with his sword, but preferred to hold steadfastly to the weapons of meekness, self-giving and love, making ridiculous claim that they were stronger than either force or injustice, and that they were God's own nature. Two millennia later, under the fierce light of the investigations of political leaders, social reformer, economists, philosophers and scientists, the teachings of that One are endorsed and acknowledged to be the truth, even if the nations of the world are still leagues from the realization of them.

One other point remains. What of war, and the use of arms? Although Christ taught and lived non-resistance, there are passages in the Epistles which tell us that those who use weapons in the name of the state and for the punishment of evil-doers are “ministers of God”. It is obvious, of course, that Christ was defining the standards of the Kingdom of God, and Paul those of the kingdoms of this world. But this does not solve our problem; for the question at once arises: to which do we belong? To the kingdom of God alone, or to both? This is a burning question of the day which divides many Christians in view, though we hope not in love and friendship.

All through the centuries there have been sects and individual Christians who have forsworn the use of weapons, outstandingly the Society of Friends. Today in England there are many thousands of all denominations who hold the same view. In the prisons of France and Germany, and doubtless elsewhere, we are told of those who cannot regain their liberty until they renounce their refusal for conscience sake to do military service. Presumably all these hold that as those who are joined to Christ and members of His kingdom, we have no business to use methods which He condemned.

But still this does not solve the problem of many sincere Christians. We are members of Christ’s church and kingdom; but, they say, whether we like to acknowledge it or not, we are also members of our national communities, enjoying all the protections and advantages to be gained by it. The police guard our interests at home, and the Navy and Army abroad. We are not yet in world where all men have the new heart and love that fulfills all the law, and, as said above, the Scriptures themselves acknowledge the necessity for the control of law and force in the present state of things.

There are even Christians, particularly amongst students of prophecy and dispensational truth, who go to the extreme of teaching that we are members of Christ’s church, but not of His kingdom; that His kingdom does not appear till the millennium, and that therefore the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are not for today but for this future time. To me these teachings are appalling and wicked, in so far as they detract from the immediate claims of Christ’s standards upon us; and I think that is the general verdict of God’s people. The study of prophecy or any other branch of Bible exegesis becomes dangerous and unhealthy when not merely eras of prophecy but also moral standards are relegated to another age or people.

Then, if we object to the taking of life, we are also faced with the fact that in our relationship with the animal world we are still in the age when “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” We have to inflict death on living creatures, however much like St. Francis we recognize brotherhood with them as from the hands of the same Creator, and love them for the evidence of the beauty of His craftsmanship. There is the slaughtering of animals for food, although some Christians are vegetarians by conviction; there is also the suffering of animals in medical investigation, which again some so strongly oppose and yet from which we have all received untold benefit in the relief of human suffering; there is also the necessary slaughtering of pests, which however much some may object to the former two, seems to be a necessity to all!

So far as I can see, it does not seem possible to avoid the facing of a conflict between the standards of non-resistance taught and lived by Christ, and the methods of maintaining law, order and defense by force used by the kingdoms of this world, and endorsed for those purposes in the Scriptures.

It remains for each Christian to make a personal choice as to what his individual attitude is to be, both in his personal life and affairs, and in his allegiance to the country of his earthly birth. It is one of those subjects about which Paul said to the Romans, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

My own conviction is that Christ is the author of a new creation, the unseen head of a kingdom at present invisible, one day to be manifested. The standards of this final eternal kingdom are revolutionary, when compared to those of earthly governments, so that whenever they truly come up against each other they are locked in mortal combat; for one is based on love, the others on force, and the one is destined to swallow up the others. When that day comes, the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ, and the stone cut out without hands will smite the image (the kingdoms of this world) and break them in pieces, and itself become a great mountain that fills the earth, as Daniel prophesies. But until then His authority only extends to the hearts and lives of those who own His allegiance. To them He entrusts the sacred task of hastening the day of His coming by preaching the gospel to every creature, and by living out the standards of His kingdom in an evil age - as the salt of the earth, the light of the world.

But amongst His own there are various grades of enlightenment concerning His way of love, meekness and self-giving. Each is called to live according to his light, and to each He manifests Himself in grace and truth according to their need. To the few much is given, and much expected. They are called to walk literally as He walked, homeless, defenseless, empty-handed. They ask no reward greater than the fellowship of His sufferings and conformity to His death. They press towards the mark for the prize of His high calling. They run as the one to win the prize. All through the centuries there have been such to keep alive before mankind the perfect pattern, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. To such, the use of arms, the appeal to the law, the storing up of wealth or earthly goods, would be disloyalty to Christ. Amongst such we in the W.E.C. earnestly seek to be numbered.

But wisdom is justified of all her children. John came fasting, Jesus came eating and drinking. Others are called to be stewards of earthly wealth; to such Paul says, "Charge them that are rich in this world ...that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate". Others hold high and influential positions in the state; others are noble Christian soldiers, witnessing a good confession, occasionally in high command, while many bear their truth though hidden witness in barrack or ship. To such have been entrusted many works of mercy for which the world must for ever be grateful, the British Navy that swept slavery from the high seas; Lincoln and the Northern Armies that freed the slaves of America; Cromwell and his Roundheads who preserved the liberty of Britain. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Faith is the key to all spiritual achievement. Illumination on this some years back was one of the outstanding epochs in my life. I had been more accustomed to look on the Holy Spirit as Someone I needed mainly for the adjustment of my own spiritual life. But I then began to see that the whole purpose of His coming was to fulfill His purpose through me, and that what He had to do in me was the mere preliminary. I saw that the whole Bible and history of Christianity consisted of the Spirit's mighty works through individuals, and that the connecting link between Him and His servants was faith.

I was struck with the emphasis put on this word, supremely by Christ Himself, also in that chapter on faith, Heb. 11. Where I might say "The power of God did this", Christ said "Thy faith hath saved thee", over and over again. And the writer to the Hebrews said of each spiritual giant mentioned "By faith" he did this and that. So that the need of the world is not God's power or God's salvation, for that is already at the disposal of all. It is the man who will wield it. All Christians can say. "God CAN do this or that"; "God will do it through ME".

My faith can do the impossible! So Jesus said time and again; especially "All things are possible to him that believeth", and According to your faith be it unto you". Then a very heavy responsibility is put upon me. I have no excuse for being a failure in my calling. I have no business to hide behind the slogan I have often heard from the lips of preachers, "It is not required of me to be successful, only faithful". The truth is that the Holy Ghost has come to demonstrate the power of God through every believer, and that there is no calling or position, from what we call the humblest to the most spectacular, where life cannot have all the thrill of the greatest adventure on earth, Christ repeating His works through me.

There is one preliminary condition to the exercise of living faith - that we recognize and rejoice in our weakness. Faith sees weakness as its great asset, "Out of weakness made strong", "When I am weak, then am I strong". The difference between the man with the Spirit, and the babe or youth in the ways of God, is that the latter is afraid of his weakness; he probably knows it, and often makes mention of it in his testimony, or public prayer or when asked to do a piece of work for God; but he regards it as his chief drawback and reason for not expecting much success; in other words, what he has not yet realized in experience is that he is really relying on much of his own strength and wisdom that he can rake up, and is correspondingly alarmed at the felt lack of it, although in words he may say that he relies on God. It usually takes God many a year to teach us this one lesson, that of ourselves we can do nothing. It took Him 40 years with Moses, who had such a wonderful call, and who made one of the biggest surrenders of achievement. God compelled him to look his weakness and failure in the face for the best years of his manhood, until he was convinced that anyone but he must be Israel's deliverer. Then the living word was spoken to his heart, faith's formula had been learnt, and he left the backside of the desert never again to rely on his own strength, still less to fear his own weakness, for he knew it was the only soil in which living faith can thrive. So also with Peter, nothing but a terrible crash could show him this secret; nothing was wrong with his zeal or surrender, from the beginning he had given up more than most of us ever do, but secret self-confidence remained, undiscovered even to himself until the crash came; and only there in the true brokenness, could living faith come to birth which could be the channel for Pentecost and the foundation of Christ's Church. Once again we say, true brokenness, the soil of miracle-working faith, rejoices in its weakness instead of mourning over it, and except as an occasional cause for rejoicing, has no time to refer to it, being wholly occupied with the consciousness of the power of God. Humility is not self-depreciation, but self totally lost sight of, swamped and overwhelmed in the glory of the presence of God.

Another all-important point is that faith finds its field of action in the immediate circumstances and calling of the believer. For long I was nonplussed by the width of God's promises. There were too universal, as for instance, "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it"; to my mind, as it wandered over the vast needs of mankind, it appeared absurd to think that I could ask all these and receive them.

Exactly, I could not ask much just because my mind did thus wander over many things, instead of learning the secret of spiritual concentration. I had to learn first what asking means. It is like all the other words of the Bible that appear so obvious on the surface. Knowledge of God, for instance, does not mean head, but heart knowledge; and to ask does not mean to make verbal request, but to desire with the heart. And to desire with the heart does not mean some passing whim, but something which heart and mind and will are set upon obtaining, the asking of the importunate friend; the analysis of true praying given by Jesus, ask, seek, knock – ascending orders of intensity.

Thus I had to learn that this asking meant not just desultory praying round a number of daily set subjects, but first an inquiry as to what God was calling me to pray for. Paul tells us plainly in Romans 8 that prayer does not consist in merely asking for the thing in one's mind at the moment of prayer, but that prayer descends from God before it ascends back to Him. He says we don't even know what to pray for, and for that reason the Holy Spirit is given to guide us. He must inspire prayer in our hearts, and that prayer is bound to have an answer, for God knows what it is before we ask, for it came from Him. Nor are we so foolish as to think that this is some trick that God plays on us to make us pray, when he intends to send the thing anyhow; no, the meaning of prayer and faith is that man's co-operation is essential as God's representatives in the world, for spiritual realities can only be mediated to a carnal world through "the word made flesh", the human channels of faith and prayer.

So I first must know what I am to pray for; and as I seek to find that out, I am invariably directed first to my own immediate circumstances.

It is concerning them that God begins to speak to me and show me things that I must have. That "must" is the commencement of the true life of prayer drop off, which often used to pall, going round the same old list of requests and hardly ever knowing the thrill of an answer, and in their place comes a new plunge into the unknown, with all the zest of the discoverers of new worlds. It may start with the guidance to pray one soul through who seems impossible to win; but true guidance will be fresh and original to every person, for the Holy Ghost is always original, in grace as much as in nature. But whatever it is, our jaws will close on it with bulldog grip. We have seen this thing within the veil. It has got to be. We say so in the Name of the Lord. And note, a new tone of authority comes into our prayers and declarations – a tone which is characteristic of every man of faith from the Saviour Himself downwards. Now we shall find that our praying has suddenly narrowed. Where we used to pray for dozens of things and the most we could do was to hope those prayers were effectual, now we pray perhaps for only one thing at a time, but God has told us to pray for it, we therefore have a right to apply the promises to it.

And as we labour in prayer for it, a sense of certainty and assurance will fill our hearts which we have never known before and praying will turn to praising, and hope to certainty. I remember the first time this happened in my experience. So sure was I of the answer that I wrote to friends who with me were praying for the conversion of a young man who seemed unreachable, and told them there was no need to pray any more. Three months later he was saved, no man dealing with him.

Now we have begun to touch the inner laws of living faith. What we may begin by learning as a method of effectual praying, we shall go on to discover to be far more. It is the principle by which the

whole lives of the men of the Spirit are governed. As we examine them, we find that the keynote to their mighty works was a certainty of commission. Christ was always referring to “Him who sent me”, and the finishing of the work He was sent to do. In each of the great men of the Bible we find that they were given an exact commission: one to rescue a nation, another to take a country, another to bring back an idolatrous people to God and so on. And then we notice that all their mighty works were within the compass of their commission. Even Jesus said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” nor did He attempt to give His message to the Gentile world; it was not His commission. This is of profound significance for us, for it means that if we know our calling and commission, then we know that we have all authority within those limits. And if we have any doubt as to what our calling is, we can at least be certain of this: that it begins where we are. First we are called to prove the Almighty power of the Spirit in our immediate environment, our weakness and the impossibility of the happenings being the very soil of our faith; later it may be that as we learn to hear God’s voice more clearly, He may have some other and larger sphere for us.

Finally, the secrets of the life of faith are wrapped up in the word, Authority. Nothing is more significant in the Bible accounts that the tone of certainty and authority used by the Spirit-enwrapped men. “Kings” as well as “priests” with God. There are no “mays” or “ifs” or “we hopes” about them. “There shall be no dew nor rain these years, but according to my word”. Or Joshua telling the people over whom he had just been appointed leader, “Prepare victuals, for in three days we shall cross this Jordan”; or Paul in the storm-tossed ship, “I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you”. All of which bear out Christ’s own words, “Have faith in God” (or Have the faith of God). Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, “Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall have whatsoever he saith.” We often speak as if prayer was the greatest force on earth. No so. Faith is the giving substance to things hoped for (Heb. 11:1 R.V.); prayer is the ladder to faith; faith is the summit from which man can appear to command God, the truth of course being that living faith is the voice of God expressing His own will through man. We can see man in the Bible who prayed, but did not believe their own prayers. Hezekiah prayed against the threats of Sennacherib, but at the end of his praying he sent to Isaiah to say that “This day is a day of trouble and rebuke; for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth”. But there was strength to bring forth the word of faith with one man, or Israel would have been destroyed, and his answer was, “Thus shall ye say to your master; Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid...Behold I will send a blast.... I will cause him to fall.” By faith the deliverance came, the word of faith brought forth by the prophet became the substance in the Assyrian disaster and retreat. Zachariah and Elizabeth prayed for a son for years; Zachariah failed to believe his prayers and was rebuked by a period of dumbness, until later faith to declare his name brought deliverance; but Elizabeth believed and sang forth her exultation, and through her faith John was born.

The right to authority on the part of sinners saved by grace such as ourselves, rests on the full realization of our standing in Christ. Again and again Paul spoke boldly of it. “We have the mind of Christ”, “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit”. “We are the body of Christ” Jesus said, “I am the vine, ye are the branches”. And dozens of other like sayings. One of the weaknesses of our Christian lives is that we still constantly imagine some separation between Christ and ourselves, the traces of the fall which first brought this separation into existence, still clinging to us. We imagine it in our daily walk when we don’t “feel” in the presence of Christ; or in a time of test when the mountain of some difficulty

or sense of our own weakness oppresses us, and we don't "feel" the power of God upon us; or in prayer when we "feel" the heavens as brass. But all these are deceptions of the devil. We boldly say through grace and by faith that we are ONE, for the Scriptures say plainly we are one spirit, and how can a body be divided from its head, or a branch from its stem? God uses every simile to impress upon us the indissolubility of our union, unless we break it by returning to a deliberate life of sin. Then if we are thus one, we are thus one, we are meant to walk in the childlike realization of it. We should breathe the presence of Christ as naturally as in our bodies we breathe air. Abiding is to be no effort; we say that a person who struggles to breathe is ill, so also is a person who struggles to abide. Christ is our natural element; in reality we can't help abiding in Him, only that these feelings and appearances, fag ends of our old life in the flesh, still cling to us, and give us the illusion that we are sometimes in Him and sometimes not. It is in that sure knowledge that God and I are one that we can be steadily sure of an inward flow of guidance, and speak the word of faith with authority.

Even in prayer, a great deal of our striving and struggling is really this same failure to realize that the word of power and faith is "in our mouths and in our hearts", and all it needs is to be spoken out; and those very words of faith brought to birth in and through us by the Holy Ghost, have creative power, or rather it would be more correct to say they bring into manifestation and visibility the hidden and invisible resources of God. Christ thus "spoke" into being bread for the multitude, the silver coin for the tax, life for Lazarus, stillness on the lake, and so on. So also Elijah "spoke" into visibility the drought, the fire and the rain; the three young men immunity from the flames, and so we might go on with the list. Some of us know these things to be true by proof, as in Christ's name, hundreds of times over we have "declared" the deliverances small and great that God is going to send both for Mission and personal needs, and they have come; thousands of pounds, cars, houses, people with special qualifications, the moving of governments against their own laws, the salvation of souls, physical health. God's way in creation has been revealed to us if we have ears to hear. God said "Let there be light and there was light". The word of faith is God's way of creation, of bringing into visibility the hidden glories of His own being. He told Moses that He was equipping him with Godlike powers when He sent him to speak the words of faith for the deliverance of Israel, "I have made thee a God to Pharaoh" "Thou shalt be to Aaron instead of God". Today these things are so in a far more universal way. Then God revealed these things to the rare individual. Today, Paul says these things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world have now been made known to all through Him, the unsearchable riches to be found in this one revelation, "**Christ in you**".